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TRANSPORTATION NEWS IN BRIEF

Federal transportation funding in flux

Earlier this fall, WisDOT Secretary Frank Busalacchi visited Washington, D.C., to talk with the state's Congressional delegation about maximizing federal transportation funding for Wisconsin. Federal dollars are an essential component of the Marquette Interchange financing plan, and for the state's overall transportation budget.

To govern federal transportation funding, Congress passes long-term authorization bills (typically four to six years in length) that create spending categories and set funding levels. Each year, funding is then subject to annual appropriations that divide the available dollars into the various categories. The appropriations process will often include "earmarks," or specific provision of funds to states or individual projects.

As of press time, long-term authorizations for key modes were still pending in Congress:

- ◆ For highway and transit programs, the \$218 billion, six-year TEA 21 authorization expired on September 30, 2003. Congress passed a short-term extension to the bill in late September. Congress is considering long-term reauthorization proposals that could provide anywhere between \$247 billion and \$375 billion in highway and transit funding over a six-year time span.
- ◆ An authorization program for the Federal Aviation Administration also expired on September 30. Congress had been deliberating a four-year reauthorization bill, but negotiations bogged down over privatization of certain air traffic controllers. As of press time, Congress appeared set to pass a six-month short-term extension.
- ◆ Congress also needed to reauthorize Amtrak, but funding levels for the national passenger rail carrier varied widely between Amtrak, the Administration and the Congress. Amtrak called for at least \$1.8 billion a year in federal support; the Administration and the House set an annual appropriation of \$900 million, while the Senate called for \$1.346 billion. Congress is also considering bills to create long-term federal funding sources for high-speed rail programs to support state initiatives.

WisDOT Connector readers are cautioned that the specifics of the various pieces of legislation may have changed since going to press in late September. However, it is clear that federal funding is vital to Wisconsin's transportation investments, and yet it remains both a pressing and a difficult issue in the U.S. Congress.



This edition of the *WisDOT Connector* focuses on the Marquette Interchange. Located in downtown Milwaukee, the Marquette Interchange is the confluence of I-43, I-94 and I-794. It is a crossroads for commerce and business not only in Milwaukee, but for all of Wisconsin.

Designed in the 1950s and opened to traffic in 1968, the Marquette has structural and traffic concerns that require full reconstruction of the interchange. After years of study and planning, the reconstruction project is now slated to begin next spring. This issue of the *WisDOT Connector* examines how the reconstruction will take place over the next few years.



Governor Doyle unveils the new Marquette Interchange design (pictured) at a press conference, flanked by business and community leaders atop an office building next to the interchange.

Governor Doyle cuts cost, sets Marquette plan in motion

On July 28, Governor Jim Doyle announced a new design of the Marquette Interchange that saves \$80 million. "The Marquette Interchange is vital to our economy," said Governor Doyle. "It is a hub for the southeast region and a gateway for all of Wisconsin. After 35 years, it's time to rebuild the Marquette Interchange, to build it better, and to build it for a lower cost."

Just recently, Governor Doyle introduced an economic development initiative to Grow Wisconsin. Rebuilding the Marquette Interchange is a key element of that strategy to provide Milwaukee and all of Wisconsin with the infrastructure needed to create jobs and economic development. Earlier this year, Governor Doyle directed State Transportation Secretary Frank Busalacchi to ensure that the Marquette Interchange design was safe, would meet community needs and be responsible to taxpayers. Following this review, the Governor approved an \$810 million project, \$80 million less than previous estimates. He also announced that construction would begin in 2004 and be completed in 2008.

Secretary Busalacchi pointed out key elements of the new interchange. To improve safety and traffic flow, the new interchange will place ramps on the right side and improve ramp spacing and curvature. The design maintains six lanes in and out

of the interchange from each direction. It also frees land for development and makes many aesthetic improvements.

To achieve the \$80 million savings, Secretary Busalacchi highlighted five key elements:

- ◆ Reduce the west I-794 to north I-43 ramp from two lanes to one;
- ◆ Reduce the north I-43 to east I-794 ramp from two lanes to one;
- ◆ Maintain existing widths on High Rise Bridge shoulders;
- ◆ Reconstruct to 16th Street on the west; and
- ◆ Reconstruct to Burnham Canal on the south.

Governor Doyle emphasized the importance of employing local contractors, especially from the minority community, to build the project. This emphasis received hearty support from State Representatives Spencer Coggs and Leon Young and other community representatives in attendance.

The speakers also talked about the extensive public outreach for the Marquette Interchange design study. Over 300 meetings were held with more than 80 community groups and other agencies to review options and discuss impacts of the project.



Transportation In Focus

Fitting the community

The Marquette Interchange is a half-mile wide, a half-mile long, rises 130 feet above the ground and handles 300,000 vehicles per day.

The Marquette is obviously a major landmark in downtown Milwaukee. As the state entered the design phase, one key consideration was how to make the interchange fit better with the downtown community, both functionally and aesthetically.

The new Marquette Interchange design improves the “fit” into downtown Milwaukee:

- ◆ The project will take five acres of permanent right-of-way, but returns six acres of right-of-way for other use, including potential redevelopment.
- ◆ There are just three businesses and one residence that need to be relocated for the project. The largest business, Aldrich Chemical, has already broken ground on a replacement plant on Milwaukee’s northwest side.
- ◆ The project supports the city’s downtown development plan to convert several one-way streets to two-way streets.
- ◆ The new design realigns 11th Street near Wisconsin Avenue, making a pedestrian-friendly corridor for Marquette University.

The project does not require above-ground sound barriers, nor does it significantly increase the height of the interchange. The tallest point on the new interchange will be just nine feet higher than the existing apex. The ramp nearest Marquette University will rise by just 12 feet, or roughly the same height as a semi-trailer.



Art and aesthetics abound

The Marquette Interchange designers are also using principles of community sensitive design, or CSD, to improve the aesthetics of the new interchange. CSD principles were a major factor in the design of the Lake Parkway (WIS 794) on Milwaukee’s south side and have been well received by motorists and residents.

A community-based CSD task force for the Marquette Interchange held design workshops in neighborhoods to review possible architectural and artistic elements. Local artists have been solicited to submit and examine artwork to become part of interchange structures.

As a result of these meetings, the task force is seeking to reflect African-American heritage on bridges at Fond du Lac Avenue and Walnut Street. Underneath I-794, the task force is working with neighbors to make the area more pedestrian-friendly and visually appealing, fitting in with Milwaukee’s Historic Third Ward and the Riverwalk district.



Traffic and safety drive the design

With over 300,000 vehicles using the Marquette Interchange every day, and with about 700 crashes every year, safe and efficient flow of traffic was a driving factor in the design of the new interchange.

Traffic has grown significantly in the interchange since its opening in 1968. Originally designed to handle about 150,000 vehicles, daily traffic levels had already reached 210,000 by 1976. By the year 2025, forecasters expect nearly 375,000 daily vehicles on the interchange.

This growth has created problems for traffic flow. Tight curves and narrow ramps are difficult to maneuver. Crossing from a left on-ramp to a right off-ramp becomes hazardous. Small incidents cause large delays, due to the residual backup of thousands of vehicles.

Of the 700 or so crashes every year, over 60% are rear-end collisions, common on congested highways that require frequent lane changes. Nearly half of Marquette Interchange crashes occur from 1 p.m. to 7 p.m., during the peak afternoon rush hours.

Building a safer interchange

The new Marquette Interchange design specifically addresses traffic and safety concerns:

- ◆ The design increases space between ramps to make merging easier and smoother;
- ◆ Several ramps will have less severe curves to make driving speeds more consistent;
- ◆ Selected ramps will be increased from one to two lanes to improve flow; and
- ◆ Left-hand ramps are eliminated, to reduce the need for lane changes and traffic weaving.

The elimination of left-hand ramps should provide a significant safety benefit for motorists. Federally-sponsored studies from the past 20 years consistently show that left-hand ramps are twice as dangerous as any other type of freeway on- or off-ramp.

Maintaining access to downtown Milwaukee

While seeking to improve safety and traffic flow, the Marquette design also recognizes the importance of good access to downtown Milwaukee. Access points are maintained and improved at 13th Street, Plankinton Street, St. Paul Avenue, James Lovell Street and the Kilbourn Avenue tunnel. New ramps provide improved access to and from the Tory Hill area near Marquette University.



Marquette Interchange: Serving Downtown Milwaukee

- Over 125,000 residents
- 4,200 private employers with almost 127,000 jobs
- More than 3,600 hotel rooms
- Over 7 million attending tourism events and attractions



Keeping Milwaukee open for business



Downtown Milwaukee will be “open for business” during the Marquette Interchange reconstruction.

Milwaukee is a vibrant and thriving community, but the Marquette Interchange reconstruction will be dominated by the color orange – as in orange barrels, orange vests and orange traffic cones. The state is taking many steps to make sure that downtown Milwaukee businesses, events and destinations will still see plenty of green – as in dollars – while the project is underway.

Downtown Milwaukee is a hub of commercial, retail and tourism activity, and the Marquette Interchange reconstruction will keep downtown open for business. While not all lanes or ramps will

“Open for business” continued on page 3

Bringing jobs to the community

Reconstruction of the Marquette Interchange will be an \$810 million investment for the future of Milwaukee and the region. The state wants to make sure that the investment also benefits community laborers and construction firms in the present.

A major focus of the reconstruction will be the contracting of disadvantaged business enterprise (DBE) firms and the hiring of minority laborers. According to state figures, unemployment rates among minority workers in Milwaukee County are three to four times that of non-minority workers. Almost 60% of all unemployed workers in Milwaukee County are minorities.

Recognizing the need to fill jobs in the local community, the state has convened an advisory committee to increase DBE participation and create labor opportunities for minorities and women on the Marquette project. A plan developed by the committee will help maintain and monitor DBE/minority participation on the project.

The Marquette project has already achieved some success, as about 25% of the funding spent on engineering and design went to DBE firms.



Helping DBEs build capacity

An important step in increasing DBE participation is to build the capacity and abilities of firms in the industry. The Marquette Interchange will be a massive project, far beyond the size and scope of any other highway project in the state. Some firms may not currently have capacity to participate in such a large-scale undertaking.

To address this problem, the state is implementing a business capacity building program. This effort will provide a variety of assistance to DBE firms:

- ◆ The program will help DBE firms address technical, managerial, administrative and capital investment issues.
- ◆ It will educate DBE firms on creating and managing mentor/protégé and joint venture opportunities to build expertise among their staff.
- ◆ The program will feature special outreach to help develop prime and

subcontractor DBE firms in key construction areas, and to help identify bonding and working capital available from financial institutions.

One specific program to help DBE firms and minority workers is the Transportation Alliance for New Solutions (TRANS) program. This is a public-private partnership established in 1995 to train entry-level workers for skills that are needed to obtain jobs as laborers.



Looking to the future

In addition to the present efforts to build minority participation on the Marquette project, WisDOT is involved in many youth programs that aim to get students on the right path for transportation careers:

- The department is a partner in the ENCOMPASS program, a Milwaukee-area initiative to recruit women and minorities to the engineering sector.
- The state’s Summer Affirmative Action Internship Program has been going on since 1973, with WisDOT typically funding 20 positions each year.
- The department sponsors a weeklong Career Awareness camp for middle school children to learn about transportation careers.
- A highly successful program is the Aviation Career Education program, which employs urban area high school kids in summer jobs in the aviation industry.
- WisDOT also promotes the Minority Engineer Program and the Minority Engineer Specialist Program to provide internships in the engineering field.

With major transportation investments needed throughout southeast Wisconsin through at least 2030, even today’s grade school students can start down the road to a future job.



Creating the Marquette Interchange

The beginnings of the Marquette Interchange can be traced back to nearly a half-century ago. In December 1952, citizens were first presented with an artist’s sketch of a major interchange in the heart of Milwaukee. From that drawing, the Marquette Interchange was born. Originally called the Central Interchange, it took more than 15 years to plan, build and construct.



Photo by CH2M

- 1952: Engineering consultants for the city of Milwaukee propose a north-south and east-west freeway with an interchange in the general area of the present-day Marquette
- 1953: State law creates the Milwaukee County Expressway Commission to plan, design, construct and maintain a freeway system in Milwaukee County
- 1953: The first of 474 parcels are acquired for an overall right-of-way cost of approximately \$12 million
- 1956: The Expressway Commission hires HNTB as the consulting firm to design the interchange
- 1964: Construction begins – 21 major construction contracts, totaling more than \$33 million, are awarded between 1964 to 1968
- 1968: The interchange is dedicated and opens to traffic on December 23, 1968



Photo by CH2M

“Open for business” continued from page 2

be open at any given time, key goals of the construction project are to maintain at least two lanes of through-traffic in all directions, and to provide access to downtown from all directions.

The state has convened a traffic mitigation task force of local government officials, business groups and state agencies to help ensure smooth traffic flow while the project is underway. The task force is proceeding along many fronts to move traffic during the construction period:

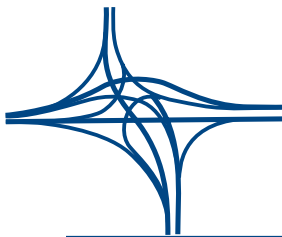
- WisDOT will extend its traffic camera, sensor and ramp meter operations to more closely monitor traffic conditions.

- A comprehensive public information campaign will give motorists and businesses timely and accurate information to travel in and through the construction areas.
- The project will upgrade key city intersections and improve traffic signals to handle the anticipated changes in traffic.
- Transit will play a key role in traffic mitigation. The Milwaukee County Transit System will expand certain routes and integrate services with other surrounding transit systems.

The ultimate success of the traffic mitigation efforts will depend greatly on the willingness of motorists to respond to information, seek alternate routes and reduce the number of auto trips by taking transit or carpooling. It appears that southeast Wisconsin residents will be up to the task – WisDOT experienced good response to traffic mitigation measures on recent repaving projects on US 45 and I-94.



Reaching out to all cultures



MARQUETTE INTERCHANGE

Building Wisconsin's Future

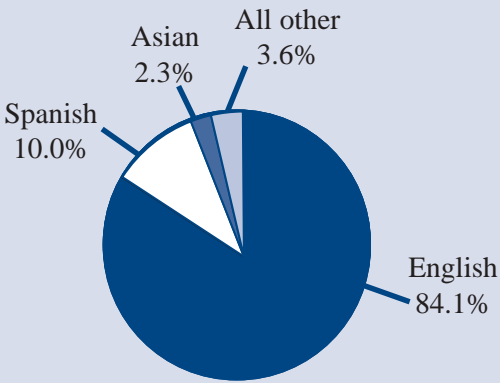
“Como la piedra angular del sistema de autopistas en el sureste de Wisconsin, el enlace Marquette liga alrededor de un tercio del tráfico interurbano del estado con el resto del país.” Excerpt from WisDOT’s Spanish language fact sheet on the Marquette Interchange.

The Marquette Interchange represents a vital interest for the entire Milwaukee community, and WisDOT has worked extensively to gain community input on the project.

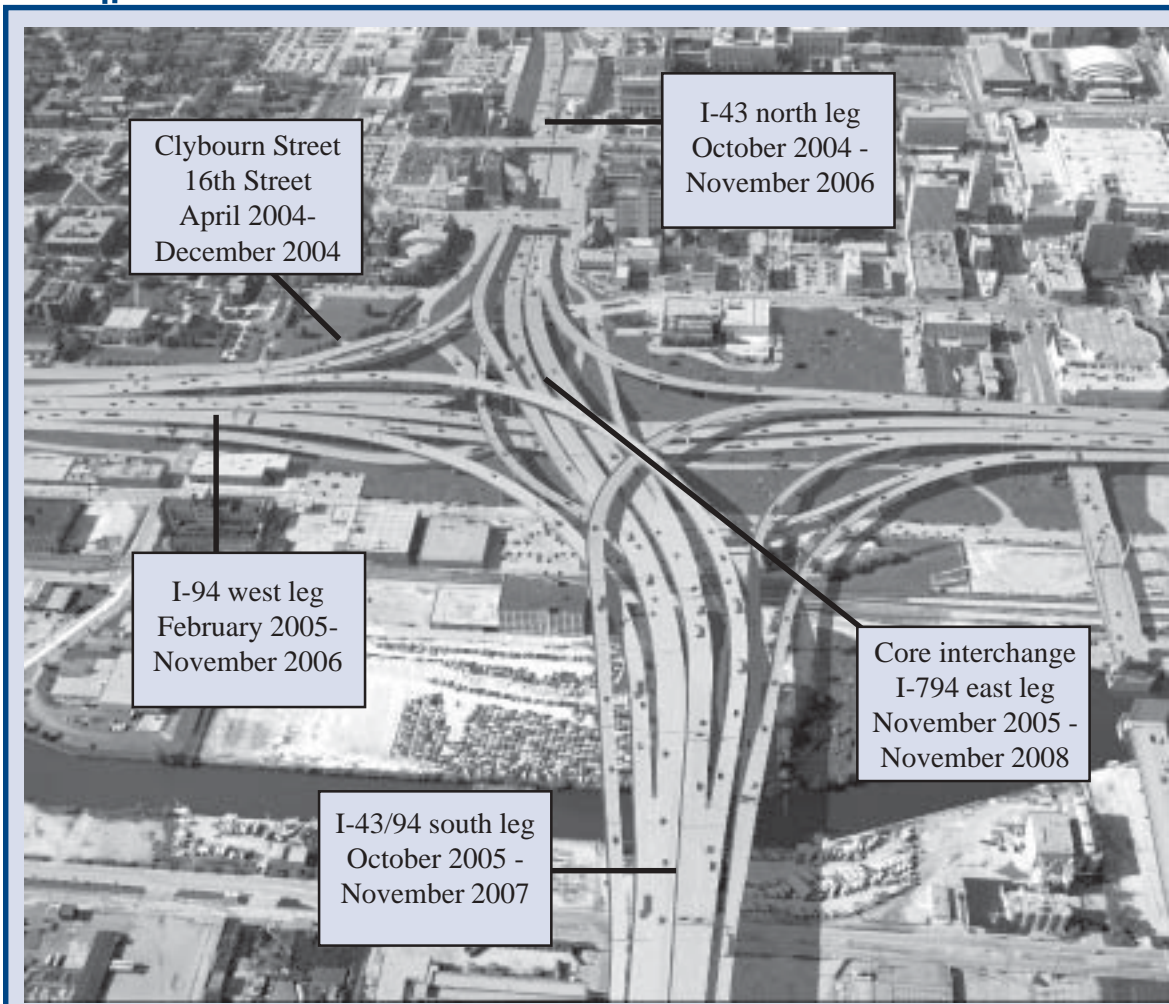
At times, though, traditional methods of public involvement are not effective with multi-cultural populations. In particular, there is often a language barrier that needs to be overcome. Almost 16% of all households in the city of Milwaukee speak more than one language in the home.

As work continues on the project, WisDOT is making special efforts to reach non-English speaking constituents. The department is translating most key project documents into Spanish and Hmong. WisDOT has also taken special strides to involve multi-cultural audiences in locations and settings that are familiar and inviting.

**City of Milwaukee
Languages by household
(source: US Census, 2000)**



For more information, visit the project Web site at www.dot.wisconsin.gov/projects/d2/marquette/index.htm.



Marquette Interchange contacts

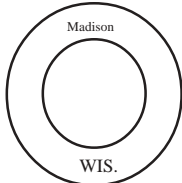
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